Actor gunned down in Chuhng

LAHORE: A senior television and film actor, Rana Aftab, was allegedly gunned down by unknown suspects in a private housing society in the Chuhng area here on Tuesday.

As per the police sources, three to four unidentified armed men arrived in a car in a private housing society and intercepted the actor, who was also in a car. One of the attackers got out of the car and sprayed bullets, leaving Aftab critically injured. The actor succumbed to his injuries on the spot.

The attackers later fled the scene, exposing the security lapse by the private housing society management.

Lahore Operations DIG Faisal Kamran says the police have managed to arrest the main shooter, who allegedly killed the senior actor, adding that teams have been deployed to trace his accomplices.

The body has been shifted to a hospital for the postmortem examination, while legal proceedings have been initiated.

A police officer says that investigators are trying to determine the motive behind the killing. The killing of the senior actor has sparked outrage among the film and TV community members, who demanded immediate arrest of the killers.

Apart from his acting career, Rana Aftab served as an excise officer. He retired a few years ago. The victim's wife, Huma, told reporters that her husband performed in many television dramas, including Lal Andhi, Log, Rakhwala and Ek Mohabbat Azmaish, besides PTV's Punjabi productions.

He also acted in films such as Aman Ke Rakhwale, Wehshi Gujjar, Miss Italy, Madam Charlie, Sher-e-Lahore and Qabza Group.

The FIR was lodged against the unknown attackers on the complaint of Ms Huma.
— **Staff Reporter**

PRA seals eight defaulter food joints

LAHORE: intensifying its drive against the tax evaders, the Punjab Revenue Authority (PRA) teams on Tuesday sealed eight restaurants and food outlets besides issuing warning to others for stern action on account of non-payment of tax on services.

According to a spokesperson, the PRA has intensified enforcement operations against sales tax evasion, record manipulation and violations of tax laws. As part of these actions, PRA enforcement teams inspected and scrutinised sales records at 31 locations across the province.

During the operations, sales records of eight restaurants and food outlets were seized, while 17 establishments were issued notices for non-compliance. In addition, six marquees and wedding halls were served warning notices for failure to use the Electronic Invoice Monitoring System (EIMS).

The enforcement activities were carried out in Lahore, Rawalpindi, Sargodha, Faisalabad and Multan.

The spokesperson said these actions were initiated due to non-payment of sales tax despite prior notices and evidence of tampering with sales records.

He emphasised that taxes paid by the public are a trust of the government, and their timely and transparent payment must be ensured. Consumers have also been urged to always obtain an e-bill after making payments to help promote transparency and compliance.

SEALED: Lahore Development Authority teams on Tuesday seals as many as 72 properties on account of non-payment of commercialisation fee.
— Staff Reporter

Locomotive catches fire

By Our Correspondent

KASUR: Dozens of passengers and driver of the Allama Iqbal Express saved their lives by jumping off the train on Tuesday when its locomotive caught fire at a level crossing near the Kot Radha Kishan Railway Station.

According to eyewitnesses, Karachi-bound train stopped at the level crossing, at a short distance from the Kot Radha Kishan and smoke started emitting from the locomotive. Later, the driver of the train and passengers jumped off in panic as flames started rising.

According to railways sources, apparently, the fire had erupted due to a short circuit but investigation was still going on. Later, the faulty locomotive was removed and replaced with another locomotive sent from the Raiwind Railway Station.

Govt begins installing safety rods on bikes

Colleges, universities told to provide buses along with drivers to administration to ensure 'Safe Basant' activity

SAFETY rods being installed on motorcycles outside the Greater Iqbal Park. — White Star

LAHORE: The district administration has launched a citywide campaign to install safety rods on motorcycles to protect riders from kite strings.

The campaign was inaugurated at Azadi Chowk by Commissioner Maryam Khan, Lahore Capital City Police Officer (CCPO) Bilal Siddique Kamyana, and Chief Traffic Officer (CTO) Dr. Athar Waheed.

A road safety camp was set up on Yadgar Road, Azadi Chowk, where free safety rods were installed on motorcycles. The commissioner, CCPO, and CTO reviewed the installation process and emphasised strict enforcement of safety measures during Basant.

On the other hand, the Punjab government on Tuesday directed all public sector universities and colleges in Lahore to place their buses at the disposal of the district administration to ensure free transport for the public during the three-day 'Safe Basant' celebrations from Feb 6 to 8.

According to officials, the Punjab Higher Education Department (HED) issued instructions to vice chancellors, principals, and administrations of public sector universities and colleges to provide buses along with drivers for three days. The move aims to facilitate citizens, reduce traffic congestion, and enhance public safety during the cultural festival.

The HED deputy secretary conveyed the directions to educational institutions through official communication, including WhatsApp messages, asking them to fully cooperate with the government initiative.

The decision comes as part of a broader 'Mehfooz Basant' plan being implemented by the Punjab government, Lahore district administration, and law-enforcement agencies to ensure safe and regulated celebrations within the limits of Lahore district. Meanwhile, speaking to the media, Commissioner Maryam Khan said free ride services would be available across the city during the three-day festival and made it clear that no motorcycle would be allowed on Lahore's roads without a safety rod. She reiterated that 'Safe Basant' would be celebrated strictly within Lahore district on Feb 6, 7, and 8, and kite flying would not be permitted before Feb 6.

She further stated that the sale of kites and strings would be allowed only from Feb 1 to 8, while manufacturing of kite-flying material would be restricted to Lahore district alone. Only registered manufacturers, traders, and sellers would be allowed to operate, and all must display valid NOCs. Online registration of businesses is underway through the "e-Biz" app, with licences being cleared within three days.

CCPO Bilal Siddique Kamyana warned that strict legal action would be taken against violations of Basant-related laws, including aerial firing and non-compliance with safety regulations. "Ensuring the safety of citizens is our top priority, and there will be zero tolerance for violations," he said.

CTO Lahore Dr. Athar Waheed said 100 road safety camps have been established across the city, where safety rods are being installed on 50,000 to 60,000 motorcycles daily. He added that more than one million safety rods would be installed to ensure maximum protection for motorcyclists during Basant.

Officials said all departments, including police, traffic police, district administration, and educational institutions, would work in close coordination to ensure that 'Safe Basant' is celebrated peacefully, safely, and in accordance with the law. — **Imran Gabol**

Amid climate crisis in Lahore, 'PU cuts down' 60 grown trees

University claims Shaikh Zayed Islamic Centre is autonomous, it had hired contractor to fell trees; VC orders inquiry

By Imran Gabol

LAHORE: Despite a clear ban imposed by the Lahore High Court (LHC) on felling trees, allegations of indiscriminate tree-felling have emerged at the Punjab University, triggering public outrage, student backlash on social media and an official inquiry by the university administration.

According to an application submitted by the Shajar Dost Community, the controversy began after the western outer wall of the PU's Shaikh Zayed Islamic Centre collapsed following strong winds and rain, damaging seven trees months back.

In response, the university's engineering branch reportedly proposed the cutting of 48 trees located adjacent to the wall.

The application states that on Jan 17, 2026, a private contractor began cutting down trees with the operation continuing intensively over the weekend. As the university was closed on Saturday and Sunday, the trees were allegedly cut and removed without any resistance or notice taken by the students.

The Shajar Dost Community further alleged that no tender for the cutting of trees was advertised in either the print media or on the university's website, calling the process illegal. It claimed that without informing the auction committee, the tree-cutting contract was awarded for just Rs550,000, and that nearly 60 trees had already been felled. Among them were fruit-bearing mango and jambolan trees. The community has demanded a transparent and impartial inquiry into the matter.

The issue quickly gained attention on social media where students, environmental activists and concerned citizens condemned the needless tree-felling activity in the middle of the city.

Several students shared pictures and videos from the site, accusing the authorities of violating court orders and destroying green spaces on the campus.

Many social media users questioned how such an activity could take place at a leading public university, calling it 'environmental negligence' and urging accountability. Hashtags condemning the incident circulated widely, with students demanding strict action against those responsible and immediate reforestation.

Meanwhile, PU Vice Chancellor Dr Muhammad Ali Shah took notice of the incident and ordered an immediate halt to any further tree-cutting, after 60 trees had already been cut down, along with a prompt investigation. Terming illegal tree-felling a serious offence, he said it would not be tolerated under any circumstances.

However, a university spokesperson said the Shaikh Zayed Islamic Centre—an autonomous institution within the university—had initiated the cutting on Sunday night without informing the university administration. Upon receiving a report from the security office, guards rushed to the site, stopped the operation, and intercepted a tractor-trolley loaded with logs of the trees that were cut down, he claimed.

The spokesperson added that the Islamic centre's administration had illegally hired a private contractor without approval from the PU or relevant authorities. While some of the felled trees were reportedly dry, the prescribed rules and regulations were not followed even for their removal, he added.

Calling the incident very unfortunate, VC Dr Shah directed strict action against those responsible. He acknowledged that the loss could not be immediately compensated but assured that hundreds of new trees would be planted at the same location without delay.

The incident has, once again, raised questions about enforcement of environmental laws and the protection of green spaces in public institutions, particularly at a time when climate concerns are growing across the country. It also shows lack of knowledge among the people, even educated ones and the academia, about the importance of trees in a big city like Lahore.

Azma summoned to record her evidence in fake video case

LAHORE: A judicial magistrate dismissed on Tuesday an application by Punjab Minister for Information Azma Bokhari, seeking recording of her evidence only after the completion of other prosecution witnesses' evidence, in a case of uploading her fake video on social media.

Magistrate Naeem Wattoo issued a "strict direction" for the minister to appear in person on Wednesday (today).

The suspects, including PTI social media activist Falak Javed and Shaqiue are on judicial remand in this case, while Attique Riaz, Haider Ali and Tufail Ahmad are on bail.

The case, which pertains to a 2024 social media campaign, involving a fake and objectionable video, reached a critical juncture at the last hearing held on Jan 16.

The minister's counsel argued that due to her engagements in the Punjab government affairs, she was currently unable to appear before the court.

He requested that the complainant's statement be recorded at the end of the trial's prosecution phase.

However, the defense lawyers opposed the request, citing the Qanun-e-Shahadat Order, 1984. They argued that the complainant, as the star witness, must record her evidence first, so it can later be corroborated by other prosecution witnesses.

In his written order, the magistrate ruled that holding a public office does not constitute a plausible or sufficient ground to bypass settled legal procedures.

He noted that the minister had expressed her inability to appear in the court a a casual and vague manner, without providing specific details or documentary evidence of her official schedule.

"Extending such a privilege solely on the basis of the complainant's official status would amount to discrimination and would run contrary to the constitutional mandate of equality before law," the magistrate observed.

He noted that the Lahore High Court has already directed that this trial be concluded within two months.

With time running out, the magistrate warned that if the minister fails to appear on the next hearing date (Jan 21), the court will be constrained to proceed in accordance with law, which may include the issuance of coercive process or warrants to secure her attendance. — **Staff Reporter**

Mashhood's plea against NAB probe disposed of

By Our Staff Reporter

LAHORE: A Lahore High Court (LHC) division bench on Tuesday disposed of a petition by former provincial minister Rana Mashhood Ahmad Khan, challenging a NAB inquiry against him.

Earlier, a NAB prosecutor told the bench that it had closed the Punjab Sports Festival inquiry against the former minister.

On the basis of this statement, the bench, headed by Justice Amjad Rafiq, disposed of the petition filed by Rana Mashhood.

The former minister, the chairman of the prime minister's youth programme, had filed the petition in 2022, challenging the inquiry initiated against him. In his petition, he had asked the court to declare the inquiry illegal and set it aside.

The NAB had alleged that the former minister, the then director general of Punjab Sports Board and others were involved in awarding illegal contracts of the youth festivals held in 2011 and 2012. It said the contracts were given to unregistered and blue-eyed companies in violation of procurement rules.

It claimed that initially the calculated loss to national exchequer caused by the suspects was Rs139m. However, the investigation revealed that the actual loss was Rs200m.

Chief minister orders geotagging of PDP projects

Asks officials to start sewage, disposal, drainage and water storage tank projects in seven districts

By Our Staff Reporter

LAHORE: Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz has directed the authorities concerned to carry out extensive beautification in cities and carry out geotagging of all Punjab Development Plan (PDP) projects to ensure transparency and effective monitoring.

Presiding over a meeting of commissioners and deputy commissioners here on Tuesday, the CM ordered beautification of entry and exit points of cities, including cleanliness beneath overhead bridges, development of green belts and creation of play areas.

She also sought a comprehensive plan to establish washrooms on provincial highways for the convenience of travellers. The CM instructed that roads must be fully reconstructed and restored after excavation for sewage and drainage projects. She further directed the establishment of control rooms and management cells in all deputy commissioners' offices to monitor the PDP projects.

During the briefing, it was informed that transparency measures in PDP Phase-I projects had saved Rs2.8 billion.

"The first phase of the Lahore Development Plan has been completed successfully, while work on the second phase is under way. Under the PDP, development projects worth Rs234 billion are currently in progress across seven cities," the meeting was informed.

The CM said that sewage, disposal, drainage and water storage tank projects would be undertaken in Sargodha, Dera Ghazi Khan, Gujrat and Jhang, while trunk sewage, new disposal stations and drainage systems for rainwater would be developed in Jhelum, Hafizabad and Okara. She was informed that 526 machinery units would be provided for sewage and drainage systems under the plan, while Phase-II would cover eight additional cities.

The CM stressed that pits dug for development projects in streets and neighbourhoods must be properly covered and fenced. She directed that manhole levels should not protrude even by a millimetre to prevent accidents. She ordered uniform quality standards across Punjab, including the use of similar design and colour tiles on footpaths and along roads.

She directed the development of greenbelts and green spaces in every city and said a single utility corridor should be created under development projects to avoid repeated excavation of entire neighbourhoods. Electricity poles should be installed at the far edges of roads, while overhead wires and cables must be neatly organised after beautification, with no visible tangled wires, she directed.

She further ordered installation of streetlights in tehsils and new uniform manhole covers made of plastic-like material. She also directed that yellow and black stones be used along footpath edges instead of paint.

"Our government understands public needs and is committed to improving the environment," she said, adding that open-air gyms, walking tracks and entertainment centres should be developed in various areas. The CM also directed that benches be installed in open spaces along with small food courts.

She further ordered an audit of fire safety systems in both public and private buildings.